

Pastors Corner

- Philip and Angie Nation
- John Gregory
- Doug and Angela Hull
- Youth Pastor
- Children's Pastor

Deacons

- Rick Bennett
- Mike Golda
- Mark LaRowe
- Claude McGavic
- Kyle Reilly
- Ron Shroyer
- Richard Wood

Cancer

- Susan
- Buddy Wheeler
- Dr. Jim Ganey
- Dan
- Patrick Caldwell
- Joel Grim
- Joe Conard
- Okai
- Gary Clark
- Margaret Frey
- Corinne
- Wyatt Fulghum
- Rhonda
- Jesse Johnson

Military

Army

- Amber J. Cox
- Col. Scott King
- Sgt Matthew Lowe
- PFC Nathan Meyer
- Sean Stover
- Zack Cooper

Marines

- PFC Benjamin Guthrie
- Jeremiah Iverson

Navy

- Motte Morrison

Friends & Family

- Nilsa Pizarro-Chronic pain
- Victor Pizarro-Dementia and Parkinson's
- Jeff Nelson- Healing-body, mind and soul!
- Roger Grossman - Missionary with Lyme disease
- Joel Grim - Cancer, salvation
- Roy Shopper - (7 yo) Leukemia
- Scotty - Pain, health
- Maureen - Considering adoption for newborn twins
- Tara - Thyroid cancer
- Alaura- Life struggles and difficult decisions
- Debbie Clark - Colon cancer and recovering from surgery
- Will Hutchings - Back surgery
- Ron - Esophageal cancer
- Diane Charlton - Health
- Conant Carr - Health
- Venessa - 10 y/o with shingles
- Kevin Clark - Serious burns from accident
- Wyatt Fulghum - Brain cancer, chemo, radiation
- Phyllis Jones - ALS
- Linda Coles - Lost her son
- Wess - Heart surgery, stroke
- Elyn Sue & Sandy Boechtter's daughter - Lost homes in California
- Trey & Rhonda - Young mom with brain cancer
- Faye - Broken foot
- Jesse Johnson - Stage 4 lung cancer
- Margaret Long - Respiratory issues
- McKenzie - Lupus

Members

- Betty Huth-Memory issues
- Palm Shores Teams
- Ed Rawsthorne - Infection
- Marcella Fielder-Health
- Maurice Cooper - Spinal stenosis
- Rosner Samma - Recovery
- Sandy & Gordon Boettcher - Health
- Art & Sonja - Health
- Edie Butler - Health
- Linda Billa - Health
- Zach Cooper - ARMY
- Buster Cox - Health
- Linda Eason - Health
- Mary Gentry - Back surgery
- Jeanette Goins - Fractured spine
- Erin Pilant - TN
- Bill Romine - Health
- Candi Evans - Healing
- Estelle Goldsby - Health
- Beth Eriksen - Broken shoulder
- Barbara Almendinger - Glaucoma
- Hilci Benzing - Pregnancy
- Floyd Bailey - Neck pain
- Gary Clark - Leg healing
- Ron Kozak - Health
- Doris Blattner - Foot
- Bob Harris - Hernia surgery
- Pearlle Richardson - Low potassium

Shut Ins

- Phyllis Murphy
- Thelma Weese
- Barbara Johnson
- Harold Douberly
- Jean Basehore
- Margaret Bryant
- Paula Johnson
- Melba Gentile
- Charlie Elmore
- Doris Miles

Salvation

- Marie Aiken
- Chris and Troy Pettit
- Betty Lidster
- Todd and Terri Heasley
- Christie Galase
- Chris, Gracie and Cameron Hill
- Kim Harding
- Bob Fisher
- Christina and Jennifer
- Levi and Calvin Blair
- Jerry McAninch
- Steve Bell's family
- Josh Conard
- Susie
- Hillary G
- Nik Knoth
- Brenda Smith
- Bobby Williams
- JR
- Idelle Bee
- Herb Frith
- Meri and Krishna
- Todd Center
- Brent Shearl
- Zachary and Nicole
- Jim Evans
- Bob Luersen
- Amy & Diane



On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed a watchman...
—Isaiah 62:6

First Bradenton

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The Gift Given Without Limits

I am Jacob the patriarch of Israel. As a young man I spent many a night under the stars with my future father-in-law's sheep. I am a shepherd. It was my job to protect that flock from predators, bandits, weather, rough terrain and all manner of dangers both large and small, day and night. I was responsible for finding safe pasture and fresh water for the animals in my care. Every year, I also shear the sheep. It makes the summer months more bearable for them, and we use the wool. Not once has a sheep stopped to thank me.

At the end of my life, my favorite son was returned to me, and I blessed his two sons. At the time I was ruminating on my profession. I realized late in the game that the God of my fathers has been a shepherd to me all my life. Through all my journeys and wanderings, He was leading me, protecting me and providing for all my needs. I may not have recognized His tender hand in the midst of my struggles, but He was watching over my meandering way, day and night. He was there in the darkest hour and at the height of my triumphs. I blessed my grandsons, *"The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."* (Genesis 48:15-16)

As my Shepherd, God, has protected me and

provided for all my needs. He has guided my way. He has even sheered away the excess baggage I was lugging around. What a perfect analogy for my God.

Other References to God as Shepherd

King David also referred to God as his Shepherd.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23)

Asaph sang to God, *"Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock!"* (Psalm 80:1) He goes on to ask for protection from his enemies and deliverance. He appeals to God who has always guided and protected his nation.

Isaiah encouraged his people as he described God. *"Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,*

In His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.” (Isaiah 40:11) Isaiah pictures God as a gentle Shepherd watching over the needs of the flock.

The writer of Hebrews reminded us of the sacrifice offered by the Great Shepherd in his benediction, *“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* (Hebrews 13:20-21) Here he recalls Jesus’ sacrifice and at the same time prays that the Shepherd will provide all we need to accomplish His mission.

Peter also reinforced this concept. *“For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”* (1 Peter 2:25) Here Peter uses the shepherd analogy to emphasize two points. First, we are like witless sheep who easily wander from where we really should be. Second, God (the Shepherd) guards not just our bodies but also our eternal souls.

The Good Shepherd

Jesus referred to himself as the Good Shepherd. *“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”* (John 10:11-15)

Jesus compares the good shepherd with the hireling. The shepherd never abandons the flock. He remains their protector, regardless of the dangers he must face. Hired hands with no vested interest run at any sign of danger leaving the sheep defenseless. The real shepherd knows his sheep, every single one. He knows what they

need individually and as a flock. AND, the sheep know the shepherd. They know his voice. The sheep trust the shepherd and follow him. The good shepherd is willing to die for his sheep. Jesus, our protector, is the Good Shepherd who laid down His own life for us.

Shepherd’s Responsibilities

To recap, let’s review the shepherd’s role. It is his responsibility to provide pasture and good water for the sheep. He keeps the animals from wandering too far. He protects the sheep from predators and bandits. He cares for the small, the sick and the weak. He sheers the sheep routinely.

How is God like a shepherd to you? Can you see His hand directing your steps? Do you hear His voice calling you back to the path when you stray? Looking back over the years, have you witnessed His protection from danger? Have you ever felt weak or sick or alone and experienced the comfort only He can give? I have. Many times I have felt like the lost sheep He gathered in His arms and carried to safety.

This Sheep’s Need

We are told that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows us individually, protects us and provides for our needs. With this in mind, consider our primary spiritual needs and how God provides for us.

John the Baptist’s disciples were concerned that people were leaving him and going to see Jesus instead. John said of Jesus, *“...For He whom God has sent [Jesus] speaks the words of God; for He [Jesus] gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son [Jesus] and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”* (John 3:34-36)

John’s disciples worried that Jesus was stealing John’s ministry, but John told them that his call was to prepare the way for Jesus. *“He must increase and I must decrease.”* (John 3:30) In this quick exchange, John instructed his own that Jesus speaks the words of God and He gives the Spirit without measure. Isn’t that interesting?

John was filled with the Holy Spirit before he was even born. (Luke 1:15) John walked with the Holy Spirit all his life. John relied on the Holy Spirit’s direction for every move he made. Of the few words we have recorded that John the Baptist spoke, one of them was this encouragement that the Holy Spirit is given to us without measure. There are no limits to the amount of the Holy Spirit we receive.

We measure out a cup of milk. We buy meat by the pound. Lumber is measured by the foot. Shampoo is gauged in ounces. Drugs are dispensed by the pill. Paychecks are meted out in dollars. But, we do not measure the air we breathe. There is an infinite supply of air, enough to meet all our needs and more. Oxygen in our lungs is a primary requisite of our survival, and we have free access to all the air we can breathe. Likewise, the Holy Spirit within us is required for our spiritual well being. He also is given to us without limits.

Things that are Measured

Let’s look at the word translated as “measure” to see other places it is used in the New Testament.

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.” (Romans 12:3)

Here Paul is instructing us about spiritual gifts, and he tells us that we are each given a certain amount of faith, a measurable amount, a limited quantity. He reinforces this concept as He talks about the gifts of prophecy, teaching, service, exhortation, giving, leadership and mercy. He instructs the prophet to exercise his gift *“according to the proportion of his faith.”* The Holy Spirit in our lives is not limited, but we are given a defined amount of faith.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians about another measured gift from God to His sheep. *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.’”* (Ephesians 4:7-8) Grace is a gift that is measured out for us by Jesus. So we have an unlimited quantity of the Holy Spirit, but both faith and grace are measured as we

need them. Immediately following this verse, Paul goes on to talk about the ministry roles that God gives, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. (Ephesians 4:11)

Then, Paul discusses another measure using the same word. He said that these gifts were given *“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:13) This is our goal. We will all grow to maturity to the full measure of development, perfectly resembling the life and attitudes and desires of Jesus. It looks like our maturity is also measured.

One other interesting passage uses this same word. Jesus warned, *“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”* (Matthew 7:1-2) Our judgment is also measured, but it is not God who determines the ruler that used. We do. The unit of measure that we use to render judgment is also the unit that God uses to mete out our own judgment.

Our Shepherd’s Gift

Today we’ve seen that judgment, grace and faith are measured out for us as needed. We see that God gives gifts to His people at His discretion, and not everyone gets the same gifts. And, we’ve found that the Holy Spirit is offered without limits.

We must infer that the Holy Spirit is the most fundamental need that we have. Like the air we breathe, so is the Holy Spirit. Without His work, His protection, His guidance and His wisdom, we would be spiritually dead. He is not a one time gift. We need Him every moment, from the time we are born into the Kingdom of God.

Is it any wonder that Jacob, David, Asaph, Isaiah, the writer of Hebrews and Peter all referred to God as their Shepherd? The Good Shepherd knows each one of us. He knows our individual and collective needs. He measures out the gifts we need and He gives His Spirit without measure to everyone of us. He protects us, provides for us and leads us.